

William Thaddeus Coleman, Jr.: Breaking the Color Barrier at the U.S. Supreme Court

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Introduction

On April 15, 2007, baseball fans celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of Jackie Robinson's debut with the Brooklyn Dodgers—an event that broke the color barrier and integrated major league baseball. In stadiums across America, professional baseball teams honored the memory and accomplishments of Robinson, as managers and players donned Robinson's retired jersey number, Hall of Famers threw out ceremonial first pitches, and tributes boomed from video displays. The tributes to Robinson, however, like his legacy, went far beyond the ballparks, as newspaper and television journalists debated Robinson's role as a civil-rights pioneer while lamenting the dwindling number of minorities playing baseball and elementary school children read stories of Robinson's stirring feats.

On September 1, 2008, the U.S. Supreme Court perhaps should celebrate a similar anniversary: the sixtieth anniversary of the arrival of the first black law clerk at the Court. His name is William Thaddeus Coleman, Jr.,¹ and on September 1, 1948, Coleman began clerking in the Chambers of Associate Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter. A graduate of Harvard Law School, Coleman used his Supreme Court clerkship as a stepping stone to a remarkable legal and political career, highlights of which include working as the

first black lawyer in both major Philadelphia and New York law firms, volunteering his time and expertise for the desegregation cases collectively referred to as *Brown v. Board of Education*, being president and then chairman of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), serving as the Secretary of Transportation in the Ford administration, and receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Clinton.

The purpose of this essay is twofold: It will endeavor to succinctly summarize the important events of Coleman's life and professional career, while making the argument that these achievements were as groundbreaking in the legal community as Robinson's were to baseball. Admittedly, looking to our national pastime is hardly an original literary maneuver; The myriad similarities and links between baseball and the law have offered rich material for many legal writers.² Moreover, this article does not wish to diminish Coleman's accomplishments by comparing them to a mere "game." By drawing upon the sixtieth anniversary of Robinson's debut, my hope is to give Coleman his due and place his laudable achievements in the proper perspective. Not only did the two men do much to dispel the pernicious stereotype that they belonged to a race that was doomed to second-class citizenship, but their efforts to integrate their respective professions and to use their talents to effect change reverberated throughout society.

The Early Life of William T. Coleman, Jr.

William Thaddeus Coleman, Jr. was born on July 7, 1920, in Germantown, Pennsylvania to parents William Thaddeus Coleman, Sr. and Laura Beatrice Coleman. One of three children, Coleman grew up in a middle-class home where education and hard work were encouraged. Social activism and public service were practices engrained into Coleman's family. His father was a graduate of the Hampton Institute who balanced his work as the executive director of the Wissahickon Boys Club—an organization originally founded to provide educational and recreational opportunities for minorities and poor whites—with his duties as a field secretary for the Boys Club of America and as a director of a local summer camp. William Coleman, Sr. was given the middle name "Thaddeus" in honor of Thaddeus Stevens, a Pennsylvania lawyer and congressman who tirelessly worked for the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United

States Constitution. William Coleman, Jr.'s maternal great-great-grandfather was an Episcopal minister who operated the underground railroad in St. Louis, Missouri.

Coleman's mother was a former German teacher who also greatly influenced her son. "My mother always said what would redeem her living in a world where blacks and women were second place [was] that when she got to heaven, God would be a black woman."³ One pattern of Coleman's childhood was exposure to "a great many worldly people," including civil rights pioneer W.E.B. DuBois—a friend of Coleman's maternal aunt who occasionally joined the Coleman family for dinner—and poet Langston Hughes. As a result of this exposure to the world, "I knew we were as good as anybody. I never felt inferior."⁴

The lessons learned around the dinner table proved to be important as Coleman began moving into a segregated world that did not push young black students to fulfill their potential. Recalling his time at Theodore Roosevelt Junior High School, Coleman recounted the following incident.

I finished tops in my class at Roosevelt. I made what I thought was a good speech and my teacher said, "You'll make somebody a good chauffeur." I won't tell you what I told her, but I was suspended for saying it. My mother and father had to tell her, "You don't talk to a Coleman kid that way."⁵

Coleman subsequently enrolled in the predominantly white Germantown High School, where he was one of fewer than ten black students. An outstanding student, he was nevertheless suspended when he demanded to become a member of the all-white swim team. When Coleman's suspension was lifted, the swimming team disbanded rather than be forced to integrate and accept Coleman. Remarks Coleman: "The day I graduated, they posted a note saying they were starting up the swimming team again. But the coach wrote me the best

recommendation [letter] for the University of Pennsylvania.”⁶ When asked why he decided to become an attorney, Coleman pointed to his experiences of sitting in Philadelphia courtrooms as an adolescent and being impressed that the lawyers got “paid to argue,” as well as a visit as a high-school student to an operating ward at a local hospital, where he watched a stomach cancer operation and quickly decided “that wasn’t for me.”⁷ It was as a teenager that Coleman learned of the efforts of attorney Charles Hamilton Houston and the NAACP to attack and defeat segregation, a fight that appealed to Coleman’s own sense of justice and equality.

Coleman enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania, originally majoring only in political science but adding an economics major after a lawyer told his father that economics was a good field of study for future lawyers. Coleman describes his time at the University of Pennsylvania as “‘sort of a blur,’” adding “[w]e studied, and we were all glad when Friday came. If we didn’t have a theme due by ten o’clock Monday morning, we loved to spend the weekend taking the ladies out.”⁸ He graduated *summa cum laude* from the University of Pennsylvania in 1941.

Coleman arrived at Harvard Law School in the fall of 1941, one of only four minority law students in the first-year class.⁹ Although Harvard Law School had admitted its first black law student—George Lewis Ruffin—shortly after the Civil War, minority students had a minimal presence there in the following decades. Approximately nine black students attended the school throughout the decade of the 1920s, and in the 1930s and 1940s no entering class had more than five black students. As the first half of the twentieth century drew to a close, Harvard Law School graduated a class of 520 students, of whom only two were black.¹⁰

Coleman quickly immersed himself in his legal studies, going so far as to attend extra classes just to hear lectures by some of Harvard Law School’s legendary professors. His

hard work paid off in the spring of 1941, when his high grades (he was second in his first-year class) propelled him onto the staff of the *Harvard Law Review*. He was only the third black man to serve on the *Law Review*, following in the footsteps of previous graduates Charles Hamilton Houston and William Henry Hastie. While Coleman does not recall feeling any trepidation from being one of the first minorities to serve on the *Law Review*, he surely, like his predecessors, felt the historic weight of his selection and the consequences if he stumbled. Only twenty years earlier, Houston wrote his parents: “The editors on the *Review* didn’t want me on this fall; now all is one grand harmony. But I still go on my way alone. They know I am just as independent and a little more so than they. My stock is pretty high around these parts. God help me against a false move.”¹¹ And when Hastie, a cousin of Charles Houston, became the second black selected to the *Law Review*, in 1928, the editor-in-chief declined to invite Hastie to the traditional dinner held to welcome the new members—a decision that was reversed when then-Harvard



William Thaddeus Coleman, Jr. grew up in Philadelphia and was exposed to “a great many worldly people,” including civil rights pioneer W.E.B. DuBois—a friend of Coleman’s maternal aunt who occasionally joined the Coleman family for dinner—and poet Langston Hughes (pictured).

law student Paul Freund organized a boycott of the dinner.¹² Neither Coleman nor his contemporaries on the *Law Review*, however, recall Coleman receiving similar treatment.¹³ States fellow member Jerome E. Hyman: “Bill was a well-regarded member of the *Review*. If anything, I think there was a great deal of satisfaction that the *Review* was becoming more diverse in its membership.” While subsequent minority members followed the path laid by Houston, Hastie, and Coleman, it would not be until 1990 that the *Law Review* selected its first black president—Harvard Law School student Barack Obama.¹⁴

Coleman worked on the *Law Review* during the summer and fall semesters, typically attending classes until 1:00 p.m. and then walking to the *Law Review* offices at the historic Gannett House and working from 1:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. His studies at Harvard Law School, and his work on the *Law Review*, were interrupted by the entry of the United States into World War II. Coleman was originally conflicted about serving in the military, and he sought counsel from then—Howard Law School Dean Charles H. Houston. Recounts Coleman:

Like ten percent of the American population, I struggled with the idea whether it made sense to fight for freedom and liberty in Europe and Asia when racial segregation was still so rampant in the United States. I got an appointment to see Mr. Houston in Washington, D.C. . . . [He] gave me sound advice. He said that with all its faults, the United States is still the best country in the world. Through the use of training, knowledge, and commitment by dedicated lawyers, businessmen, and those members of other disciplines, someday the United States would be free of the scourge of racial segregation. In the meantime, if persons wanted to demand full citizenship in their country, they had to risk their lives and fortunes when the very security and being of their coun-

try was being seriously challenged by a formidable foreign force.¹⁵

Coleman subsequently enlisted in the Army Air Corps, and in 1942 he travelled to Biloxi, Mississippi for basic training before going to Tuskegee, Alabama to train with a group of black aviators who would gain fame as the Tuskegee Airmen. When Coleman stepped off the train platform in Biloxi, however, he was quickly reminded that his country’s struggle against fascism had not wiped away its own racist propensities. At the train station, Coleman was greeted by a belligerent white sergeant who called out “Hey, nigger, where are you going?” Coleman would not respond to the hated racial epithet, and he walked away from the train station until the sergeant called out “Hey, boy.” Coleman “settled” for the slightly less offensive term (a decision about which he professes “shame” sixty years later), turned around, and learned that the sergeant was assigned to transport Coleman to a nearby military base. During the dusty ride to the base, the army truck picked up several white soldiers returning from a weekend of leave. After spying Coleman, one of the soldiers turned to his compatriot and said wonderingly, ““Why do I see all these well-dressed niggers in town—what are they doing here?” Responded his buddy: ‘You know, that Mrs. Roosevelt—she taught that dumb President that those black people could fly.’” Concludes Coleman, with a smile: “So that was my introduction to the U.S. Army.”¹⁶

After basic training, Coleman trained to be an aviator at the Tuskegee Army Air Field in Tuskegee, Alabama. Describing his fellow airmen as “very good people who were good at everything,” Coleman completed his basic training before “washing out in advanced training” and deciding that “I better do something else.”¹⁷ A month later the Air Corps sent Coleman to Officer Training School in San Antonio, Texas and a month thereafter transferred him to Harvard Business School to train and be commissioned as a Second Lieutenant, with a specialty in statistical control



Perhaps Coleman's only professional failure came when he unsuccessfully trained to be a fighter pilot at Tuskegee Army Air Field in Alabama. But in 1945 he did help defend a group of Tuskegee airmen who were arrested for challenging the segregation at an officers' club in Indiana. At left are Tuskegee fighter pilots in Ramitelli, Italy in 1945.

matters. Coleman's failure to become a fighter pilot is arguably the only professional accomplishment that he would ever fail to achieve. However, he found another way to serve as a wing man to the Tuskegee pilots: In 1945 he helped defend a group of black airmen who were arrested for challenging the segregation of an officers' club at Freeman Field in Seymour, Indiana.¹⁸ Coleman spent the remainder of his military service defending soldiers during court-martial proceedings, and by his own count won sixteen out of eighteen acquittals (with one of the two convictions reserved on appeal).

The end of the war saw Coleman's return to Harvard Law School and his final year of studies. Despite Coleman's strong academic record, he fully appreciated the institutionalized prejudices that raised hurdles in the path of any young black lawyer. His sober assessment of these barriers is reflected in a handwritten letter to Associate Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black, in which Coleman applied

to be Black's law clerk: "Despite my training due to the fact that I am a negro I have encountered considerable difficulty in getting a suitable position. Your efforts and expressions in your judicial utterances led me to inquire if you would consider me for the position as your legal clerk."¹⁹ Recalling his motivation for writing the letter, Coleman commented: "I was married and had one kid and I had to do something. I figured if I made enough ruckuses something would open up to me."²⁰ In his reply, Black congratulated Coleman on his "excellent" record, but stated that his law clerk for the coming Term "was selected some months ago."²¹ When Coleman arrived at the Supreme Court in the fall of 1948, he would become friends with both Justice Black and his law clerk, Truman M. Hobbes.²²

When Coleman graduated *magna cum laude* from Harvard Law School in the fall of 1946, he faced the bitter reality that graduating first in his class, serving on the *Law Review*,

and winning the John H. Beale Prize (awarded to the Harvard Law Student with the highest grade in Conflicts of Law) did not guarantee legal employment. His first break came in his hometown of Philadelphia, when Judge Herbert Goodrich of the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals offered Coleman a clerkship position for the spring of 1947. Coleman was able to secure a Langdell Fellowship at Harvard Law School to cover the interim period between graduation and the start of the clerkship, and he returned to Philadelphia in 1948 and began serving as Judge Goodrich's sole law clerk.

Clerking on the U.S. Supreme Court

Of all the colorful and dominant personalities that have sat on the Supreme Court

Bench, Associate Justice Felix Frankfurter must be placed alongside Louis Brandeis, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., and William O. Douglas. As a Harvard Law School professor, Frankfurter had the honor of selecting law clerks for both Holmes and Brandeis—all former Harvard Law School students, all men, and all conduits through whom Frankfurter monitored the business of the Court. Once he himself joined the Supreme Court in 1939, Frankfurter relied upon his own set of Harvard Law School professors to select clerks—primarily Henry M. Hart, Jr. (himself a former Brandeis law clerk) and, in later years, Albert M. Sacks.²³ Former law clerk Andrew Kaufman writes that Frankfurter gave the professors “carte blanche” to select law clerks,²⁴ an assessment echoed in Frankfurter's letters to Hart.²⁵



In 1941, Coleman's high grades (he was second in his first-year class) propelled him onto the staff of the *Harvard Law Review*. Coleman was only the third black man to serve on the *Law Review*, following in the footsteps of previous Harvard Law School graduates Charles Hamilton Houston and William Henry Hastie. He is second from left in the front row, surrounded by his peers on the 1941–42 *Law Review*.

In December 1947, Harvard Law School Professor Paul Freund wrote Frankfurter and recommended that Coleman serve as one of his two law clerks. Frankfurter quickly responded to the letter. After noting that “I have heard a good deal about him [Coleman] on the occasion of the Sixtieth Anniversary Dinner of the Law Review, and I am not surprised at the weighty commendation that you give me,” Frankfurter clearly dispelled any concerns that race might disqualify Coleman: “I don’t have to tell you that I don’t care what color a man has, any more than I care what religion he professes or doesn’t.”²⁶ Frankfurter’s pronouncement had historical precedent: As a Harvard Law School professor, he had mentored both Charles H. Houston and William Hastie.

With Frankfurter’s declaration in hand, Professor Hart placed the telephone call that arguably changed the course of Coleman’s career:

One day I got a call from Professor Hart, asking me if I wanted to clerk next year for Justice Frankfurter. I, of course, said yes. Then he hung up. I never got any call on when I should report to Justice Frankfurter. So a month and a half later I called Paul Freund, who was my best friend at law school, who said “I’ll check.” So Freund went and talked to Hart, who said “Oh, gee, that Coleman must not be as bright as everybody says he is if he doesn’t think he has the job.” So that is how I got the job.”²⁷

Although Coleman had previously met Justice Frankfurter at the aforementioned *Law Review* dinner, he did not know the Justice and had never interviewed with him prior to receiving the clerkship offer.

While Coleman appreciated the historic nature of his clerkship with Justice Frankfurter, he modestly points to changing social conditions, not his own abilities, as the main explanation for his selection: “I knew that I was

the first . . . but I knew that under different circumstances Charlie Houston and Bill Hastie would have been the first because they were brighter, more able people . . . but they lived in a different time and didn’t have the same opportunities.”²⁸ Coleman’s hiring was sufficiently noteworthy to merit mention in the *New York Times*²⁹ and the *Washington Post*,³⁰ and Frankfurter’s personal papers contain congratulatory letters from the General Alliance of Unitarian and Other Liberal Christian Women, the Race Relations Committee of the American Friends Service Committee, the Christian Friends for Racial Equality, and Congressman John W. McCormack. In response to the letters, Frankfurter penned a simple reply:

Mr. William T. Coleman was named as one of my law clerks for next year precisely for the same reason that others have been named in the past, namely high professional competence and character. You are kind to write me, but I do not think a man deserves any praise for doing what is right and abstaining from the wrong.³¹

The extended members of the “Frankfurter family” also praised the selection. In a March 29, 1948 letter from former law clerk Harry Mansfield to Justice Frankfurter, Mansfield applauded the hiring decision. “He is a first rate choice in every respect. His mind is brilliant and with brilliance he combined judgment. And his winning personality—full of confident ease and good humor—enabled him to overcome readily whatever obstacles were raised because of his color . . . [I]t is gratifying to me that you can be the first to give someone like Bill his opportunity without relaxing in any measure the standards ordinarily applied.”³²

During October Term 1948, Coleman shared his clerking duties with fellow Harvard Law School graduate Elliot Richardson.³³ A graduate of Harvard College who served as a medic during the invasion of Normandy,



During October Term 1948, Coleman shared his clerking duties with fellow Harvard Law School graduate Elliot Richardson (right). Richardson and Coleman quickly established a daily practice that has become unique in the lore of Supreme Court law clerks: Each day, they spent one hour reading Shakespeare or poetry.

Richardson and Coleman quickly established a daily practice that has become unique in the lore of Supreme Court law clerks: Each day, they spent one hour reading Shakespeare or poetry. “Elliot went to private schools before college, and I had gone to public schools,” explains Coleman. “I felt like my education was lacking, which led to reading Shakespeare and such during our lunch breaks.”³⁴ For the modern Supreme Court law clerk, buried in a mountain of certiorari petitions and opinion drafts, the notion that an earlier generation of Supreme Court law clerks spent an hour each day reading literature must undoubtedly seem bizarre.

Such a practice, however, was in keeping with the Frankfurter clerkship tradition of challenging his clerks to broaden their intellectual horizons. “He often tested his clerks’ intellectual mettle by goading them into long arguments over legal history, current events, constitutional doctrine, and music: Name ten milestones in Anglo-American law and defend your choices. Who was Home Secretary in the Atlee

government? Who was the greater composer, Bartok or Bruch?”³⁵ Nor were Frankfurter’s interests focused solely on cases pending before the Supreme Court. ““He was interested in everything,”” states Coleman. ““By eight in the morning he had read five newspapers. He’d already have discussed foreign affairs with the Australian Prime Minister and taken a stroll with [Secretary of State] Dean Acheson. By the time we law clerks arrived at the office at nine, he’d be ready to give us a seminar on government until ten or eleven.””³⁶

Frankfurter strove to remain in the middle of the action at the Supreme Court, a fact symbolically represented by his decision to place his office in the middle of the three rooms that made up his Chambers. This arrangement meant that the law clerks shared the office normally reserved for the Justice, an office that featured a private bathroom. Any trepidation that Coleman felt in working for a larger-than-life figure such as Frankfurter was dispelled during Coleman’s first day at the Court, when Frankfurter crossed through the clerk’s office

to use the bathroom. For Coleman, it was a reassuring sign that the legendary Justice was a mere mortal.

Richardson himself lived at the “House of Truth,” named in honor of an earlier Washington home the residents and guests of which had represented a dizzying array of artists, journalists, politicians, and judges—including a young Felix Frankfurter. The second “House of Truth” had been established by Frankfurter law clerks Philip Graham, Adrian Fisher, and Edward F. Pritchard Jr., and it was subsequently occupied by a series of Frankfurter law clerks and future Washington insiders.³⁷ Coleman and Richardson remained linked throughout their professional and personal lives: Richardson was godfather to Coleman’s daughter, both men served together in President Gerald Ford’s Cabinet, and Harvard Law School established the Cox-Richardson-Coleman Public Service Award in recognition of the contributions made by Archibald Cox, Richardson, and Coleman. Richardson would later describe his friend as “a man of very clear practical judgment in grasping the essentials of any situation, with clarity of mind, strength of judgment, tenacity, and resourcefulness.”³⁸

When Coleman arrived at his clerkship in the fall of 1948, he found himself working with a dynamic personality who expected his law clerks to work in tandem with him. Frankfurter once described the relationship between Justice and law clerk as a partnership:

They are, as it were, my junior partners—junior only in years. In the realm of the mind there is no hierarchy. I take them fully into my confidence so that the relation is free and easy. However, I am, they will tell you, a very exacting task-master; no nonsense, intellectually speaking, is tolerated, no short-cuts, no deference to position is permitted, no yes-sing, however much some of them in the beginning may be awed.³⁹

In fact, the relationship between Frankfurter and his law clerks was the intellectual equivalent of a rugby match between teams of unequal ability. Former Frankfurter law clerk Alexander Bickel describes debates during which Frankfurter “‘gave it to you with both barrels. . . [T]here were no holds barred.’”⁴⁰ The law clerks returned Frankfurter’s honesty and tenacity in kind. Former law clerk Harry Wellington observes that the mainstay of the relationship between law clerk and Justice was that “one argued about everything.”⁴¹ The candor between Justice and law clerk, however, was always tempered with awareness of status and position. “You were careful [with your comments],” Andrew Kaufman says, “but you were encouraged to speak up.” The exchanges were “entirely professional and intellectual,”⁴² but could also be rather loud: “The shouts of the Justice and his law clerks could often be heard through closed doors in the hallways of the Supreme Court.”⁴³ Frankfurter’s powers of persuasion were not focused solely on his law clerks. Coleman states: “Frankfurter, above all, was a good lawyer. He could be very persuasive. Sometimes he even called my wife to get her to change my mind.”⁴⁴

The most unique aspect of a Frankfurter clerkship: It was a lifetime appointment. Of the relationship, Coleman comments that “from the day we came to the day he died, Felix Frankfurter was the nearest thing to a father or a brother that I had outside of my own family.”⁴⁵ Kaufman echoes Coleman’s observations:

[Frankfurter] was loyal to his friends. Once he admitted you to that circle—and the circle was very large—you were his friend for life. There was one group that was admitted en masse: his law clerks. Frankfurter treated us like colleagues; he was interested in our lives; he included our families in his interest; and he kept his clerks as his friends and as his colleagues forever. It is hard not to reciprocate the

affection of someone who cares passionately for you.⁴⁶

Kaufman adds that the law clerks uniformly returned this love, although the affection was tempered with “a current of tolerant criticism about his personal foibles and professional missteps.”⁴⁷

As with most Frankfurter law clerks, Coleman attended meals at the Frankfurter home and became close to Marion Frankfurter, to whom he referred as a “second mother.” In the early months of Coleman’s clerkship, Mrs. Frankfurter took on the role of writing tutor. Justice Frankfurter originally felt that Coleman’s writing skills were not on par with Richardson’s, so Coleman started getting up at six o’clock in the morning to meet with Mrs. Frankfurter for writing tutorials prior to

the start of his twelve-hour workday. Comments Coleman: “That lasted about two weeks, until she called Justice Frankfurter and told him ‘he writes better than you.’”⁴⁸

While Coleman found a welcoming home within Justice Frankfurter’s Chambers, it is instructive to remember the political and social climate in which he clerked. Not only was Coleman the first black law clerk at the Supreme Court (and most likely the first minority law clerk in the entire federal and state court system), but he was a member of a federal judiciary that had never had a minority as an Article III judge⁴⁹ and of a profession that firmly closed its doors to minority lawyers.⁵⁰

Moreover, the marble walls of the Supreme Court could not shelter Coleman from the forces of bigotry and segregation that



Felix Frankfurter (pictured with his wife, Marion) selected Coleman to be his law clerk in 1948 on the recommendation of Harvard Law School Professor Paul Freund. Coleman became close to Mrs. Frankfurter, who briefly took on the role of his writing tutor.

still held sway over the District of Columbia. In the 1940s, almost 200,000 blacks lived in the District, but they were carefully segregated from the approximately 500,000 white citizens in every aspect of daily life. The two races lived in separate neighborhoods, attended separate schools, played in separate parks, and swam in separate pools. The vast majority of restaurants, theaters, hotels, dance halls, skating rinks, and bowling alleys completely denied blacks entry, and even some hospitals refused treatment to blacks. The only places where blacks and whites freely mixed were on the District's buses and trolleys, in its federal buildings and their cafeterias, and at Union Station.⁵¹

Coleman recounts one instance of the racism that he endured during his clerkship at the Supreme Court. It was during a day when the Supreme Court was open, but the court cafeteria was closed. Coleman was working in Frankfurter's Chambers on an antitrust opinion when Richardson announced that the law clerks were going to lunch at the Mayflower Hotel and wanted Coleman to join them. Richardson subsequently called ahead to the hotel and discovered that its restaurant would not serve Coleman. Richardson did not share this information with Coleman. Instead, he nonchalantly announced that the late hour made dining at Union Station a better choice. Coleman remembers that after lunch a distraught Richardson told Justice Frankfurter what had happened, and that both men were "near tears" over the incident.⁵²

There is an interesting footnote to this story. In recent years, scholars have written much about the influence that law clerks do or do not wield over their Justices,⁵³ with some authors suggesting that law clerks influence their Justices through a variety of means—from educating the Justices as to the dispositive facts in the record to making novel new legal arguments. Influence, however, can be more indirect and diffuse. In Coleman's case, one wonders if his experiences as a black man living in a segregated city affected Frankfurter

when the NAACP mounted its frontal assault against segregation in the early 1950s. A tantalizing hint of such benign influence can be found in an article by Harvard Law School professor Mark Tushnet. Tushnet writes that during the Supreme Court's conference discussions on the case *Bolling v. Sharpe*,⁵⁴ a case that challenged segregationist practices in the District of Columbia, Justice Douglas's conference notes record that Frankfurter discussed "the experiences of colored people here especially [William T.] Coleman, one of his old law clerks."⁵⁵ While Frankfurter's main attack on segregation in the District of Columbia turned on legal, not factual, grounds, one might suggest that the passion underlying his argument that segregationist practices violated the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment was fueled by seeing a former law clerk struggle to live in a segregated community.

Coleman's clerkship with Justice Frankfurter ended in the summer of 1949, and Coleman—like the law clerks before him—became a lifetime member of the Frankfurter family. He faithfully attended the reunions of Justice Frankfurter and his former clerks, and he occasionally travelled from Philadelphia to Washington, D.C. to visit his former employer and exchange the latest news and gossip. Written evidence of Frankfurter's affection and respect for Coleman is found in two historical artifacts: (1) in the traditional, leather-bound volume of opinions that Frankfurter presented to Coleman, with an inscription reading "I know never will you pursue false gods let alone false men. It was a joy to have worked with you for a year and I shall watch your future with confident great hopes"⁵⁶; and (2) in a post-clerkship letter in which Frankfurter drew upon the words of his own hero to further praise his former clerk: "What I can say of you with great confidence is what was Justice Holmes' ultimate praise of a man: 'I bet on him.' I bet on you, whatever choice you may make, and whatever the Fates may have in store for you."⁵⁷

Subsequent Professional Career: Being “Counsel for the Situation”

Charles Houston is commonly quoted as remarking that an attorney is “either a social engineer or he’s a parasite on society.”⁵⁸ While Coleman’s career has embodied Houston’s challenge to all lawyers—especially minority lawyers—to use their legal training to improve their communities and the lives of the politically dispossessed, Coleman has moved back and forth between private practice and public service. “It is a tragedy in the [civil-rights] movement that you have got a mind like Bill Hastie or Charlie Houston . . . that had to spend all their time on one thing and not just being a lawyer,” observes Coleman. “As [Justice] Brandeis once said, ‘a good lawyer is counsel for the situation.’”⁵⁹ In short, Coleman’s wish is to be remembered first and foremost as an attorney, not a civil rights activist.

Despite his Supreme Court clerkship and impressive academic credentials, Coleman’s hopes of becoming a lawyer at a top law firm were not immediately realized. For today’s modern law clerk, a clerkship at the U.S. Court opens up a world of professional opportunities, including teaching at the elite law schools or working in the country’s most prestigious law firms (the latter coming with \$200,000 signing bonuses⁶⁰). It was a very different story for a minority law clerk in the late 1940s. Armed with letters of recommendation from Justice Frankfurter, Coleman returned to his hometown of Philadelphia and quickly discovered that prospective employers were not colorblind. “I tried like hell to get a job in Philadelphia and no local law firm would hire me.”⁶¹ Most of Philadelphia’s law firms refused to give Coleman an interview. When Coleman personally visited the firms with résumé in hand, receptionists stonewalled him and hiring partners were simply too busy to see him. And if Coleman managed to secure an interview, the outcome was always the same: a suggestion that he consider the local black law firms that specialized in run-of-the-mill tort

cases.⁶² When asked how he reacted to the rejection, Coleman simply remarked, “You just knew that life would change and things would get better . . . I’m pretty sure at that time I got indignant.”⁶³

Giving up on Philadelphia, and with only one week remaining before he left the government payroll as a law clerk, Coleman turned his attention to New York and the law firm of Paul, Weiss, Rifkin, Wharton & Garrison—the one firm that had extended an employment offer when he was clerking for Judge Goodrich. Having already purchased a Philadelphia home for his young and growing family, Coleman would spend the next three years commuting early each morning by train between Philadelphia and New York.

After three years, he was approached by attorney Richardson Dilworth and offered a position at the all-white law Philadelphia firm of Dilworth, Paxson, Kalish and Levy. “When I came back to Philadelphia, all the secretaries threatened to walk out. Mr. Dilworth told them, ‘You ought to stay; he’s a nice guy.’” Coleman’s hiring at Dilworth Paxson found one important supporter: client and media mogul Walter Annenberg. “Annenberg said, ‘If you don’t keep Coleman, I will take my business wherever he goes.’ I had never met Mr. Annenberg,” remarks Coleman, “but that was one of the great moments of my life.”⁶⁴ Coleman stayed and flourished. And he enjoyed a small measure of revenge. “Coleman betrays no bitterness about his early rejections by Philadelphia law firms. But he relished the times when Dilworth, in an effort to needle competitors, sent him to the offices of competitors to collect files of clients that had chosen to switch to Dilworth’s firm.”⁶⁵ Coleman would remain with the Philadelphia law firm until 1975, when he was nominated to be Secretary of Transportation by President Gerald Ford. When Coleman was sworn in as Secretary of Transportation on March 7, 1975, long-time friend—and now Associate Supreme Court Justice—Thurgood Marshall administered the oath at Coleman’s



Coleman (right) was asked by Thurgood Marshall to serve on the team preparing arguments in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Civil-rights work represented less than one-fifth of Coleman's professional career, but he always kept a hand in it. He is pictured here with Justice Marshall in 1975 before being sworn in as Secretary of Transportation.

request. After Ford's defeat in the 1980 presidential election, Coleman joined the Washington office of the law firm O'Melveny & Myers, where he still practices law.

During his almost sixty years as a lawyer, Coleman has represented such clients as Chase Manhattan, Ford Motor Company, Goldman Sachs, and United Airlines. He has argued nineteen cases before the Supreme Court, including four cases dealing with regulation of natural gas as sold to the local distributor, Security Pacific, a leading national bank case, and when the Court appointed Coleman *amicus curiae* in the cases of *Bob Jones University v. United States* and *Goldsboro Christian Schools, Inc. v. United States*.⁶⁶ "It was the first time in history the Supreme Court had called on someone to represent the judges below," explains Coleman. "[W]e spent the whole summer on it, running up about 780,000 billable hours, and it was all pro bono."⁶⁷ The brief and

oral arguments made by Coleman produced an 8–1 decision in his side's favor.

While Coleman has characterized his civil rights work as representing less than one-fifth of his professional career, it is in his willingness to donate his time and energy in this area that he has arguably made the greatest impact on society. In approximately 1950, Coleman received a telephone call from Thurgood Marshall, who headed the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund and asked Coleman to join an elite group of lawyers in formulating legal strategy and drafting the legal briefs in the five cases commonly referred to as *Brown v. Board of Education*. For the next four years, Coleman maintained a grueling schedule of work: spending a full day in his law office and devoting his evening to legal research and writing for the NAACP. Coleman proved to be a critical member of the team of lawyers and advisors that Marshall had assembled, and he sat



When Gerald Ford (pictured) appointed Coleman as his Secretary of Transportation, Coleman became only the second black man to serve in a presidential Cabinet.

by Marshall's side when *Brown* was reargued before the Supreme Court in December 1953. Nor did Coleman's civil rights work end with *Brown*. He subsequently represented a group of minorities seeking admission to Philadelphia's all-white Girard College, and from 1977 to 1997 he served as Chairman of the Board of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

Coleman has also responded to the call for government service. He proudly points to the fact that he has served as an advisor to seven American Presidents, starting with Dwight Eisenhower. A brief (and incomplete) list of Coleman's service includes being a member of the Presidential Commission on Employment Policy (1959–1961), a senior consultant and senior counsel to the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy (1964), a member of the United States Delegation to the 24th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (1969), a consultant to the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (1963–1975), a member of the National Commission on Productivity (1971–

1972), and co-chairman of the Secretary of State's Advisory Committee on South Africa (1985–1987). As Secretary of Transportation in the Ford administration, Coleman became only the second black man to serve in a presidential Cabinet.⁶⁸ The list could be longer: Secretary of State Dean Acheson wanted Coleman to be an assistant secretary of state, President Lyndon wanted to nominate Coleman to the federal appeals court, and then—Attorney General Elliot Richardson asked Coleman to take the position of special prosecutor in the Watergate scandal. Coleman declined all of these offers.⁶⁹

Conclusion: Just Be in the Room

Now eighty-seven years old, Coleman has received an endless list of awards from a wide range of organizations: the Presidential Medal of Freedom; the Thurgood Marshall Lifetime Achievement Award from the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund; the Chief Justice John Marshall Award from the American Bar

Association Justice Center; the Judge Henry J. Friendly Medal from the American Law Institute; the Marshall-Wythe Medallion from the College of William & Mary, Marshall-Wythe Law School; the Thaddeus Stevens Award from the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia; the Lamplighter Award from the Black Leadership Forum; the “We the People” award from the National Constitution Center; the Fordham-Stein Prize from the Fordham University School of Law; the David A. Clarke School of Equal Justice Award from the University of the District of Columbia Law School; and honorary degrees from twenty-one U.S. colleges and universities.⁷⁰

Moreover, Coleman has been present when some of America’s most prominent political figures have come into power and when such figures have stepped away from the political arena and into the pages of history. Coleman was present when Thurgood Marshall was sworn in as a Supreme Court Justice in 1967,⁷¹ and Coleman was at the Supreme Court’s east conference room twenty-four years later when an aging Justice Marshall announced his retirement from the Court. He completed the journey with Marshall in January 1993, when he stood before an assembled crowd of dignitaries at the Washington National Cathedral and eulogized his departed friend.⁷² Coleman served in a similar capacity in 2007, when he joined former Secretary of State James Baker III, Vice President Dick Cheney, former Senator Robert Dole, former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, former Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, and former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft as honorary pallbearers at the funeral of former President Ford.

The honors and awards are arguably validation for Coleman’s philosophy that the key to breaking down racial barriers is for members of minorities to be “in the room” when important decisions are made and deals are brokered. Coleman rejects the idea that the solution to racial problems are practices that separate the races, and he cringes at labels such as “African-

American” and “affirmative action.” Speaking of race relations today, Coleman states that he is “disturbed when black kids go to these great universities. They spent most of their time on African-American studies or something. They don’t get involved in traditional studies. You have to be a good scholar to be a good lawyer. They can do [African-American studies,] but that shouldn’t be your major focus.”⁷³

Jackie Robinson got on the field. The result was a Hall of Fame career that saw Robinson break into major league baseball as a twenty-eight-year-old rookie, compile a lifetime batting average of .311, steal home plate nineteen times, appear in six World Series, and win the National League’s Most Valuable Player award in 1949. While Robinson’s accomplishments alone are impressive, they do not do justice to Robinson unless they are placed within the social and racial context of America in the late 1940s.

William T. Coleman, Jr. got on the field—and to the Supreme Court. Like Robinson, Coleman’s accomplishments take on a deeper meaning when placed in the context of a segregated society. Refusing to accept the barriers placed within his path by the forces of racial animus, Coleman used his intellect and willpower to generate lifetime statistics that rival Jackie Robinson’s. On April 15, 2007, baseball fans across America celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of Robinson taking the field as a Brooklyn Dodger. This fall, the legal community should hold a similar celebration for the sixtieth anniversary of the day that Coleman walked up the stairs of the Marble Palace and broke the color barrier of the Supreme Court law-clerk corps.

ENDNOTES

¹Coleman’s grandfather in naming Coleman’s father William Thaddeus took the middle name Thaddeus from Thaddeus Stevens, an outstanding congressman who had been so active in getting the Fourteenth Amendment and the Civil Act of 1866 passed.

²See generally Roger I. Abrams, **Legal Bases: Baseball and the Law** (1998); Spencer Weber Waller, *et al.* (eds.),

- Baseball and the American Legal Mind** (1995); Eldon Ham, "Aside the *Aside*: The True Precedent of Baseball in Law; Law, the Residue of Luck—or, Who's *Not* on First?," 13 *Marquette Sports L. Rev.* 213 (2003); Paul Finkelman, "Baseball and the Rule of Law Revisited," 25 *T. Jefferson L. Rev.* 17 (2002); Michael Herz, "Symposium: Votes and Voices: Reevaluations in the Aftermath of the 2000 Presidential Election: How the Electoral College Imitates the World Series," 23 *Cardozo L. Rev.* 1191 (March 2002); Thomas V. Silvia, "Baseball as a Source of Judicial Thought and Construction," 78 *Mich. B.J.* 1296 (Nov. 1999); Paul Finkelman, "Baseball and the Rule of Law," 46 *Clev. St. L. Rev.* 239 (1998); 39 authors, "The Jurisprudence of Yogi Berra," 46 *Emory L.J.* 697 (1997); Michael J. Yelnoksy, "If You Write It, (S)he Will Come; Judicial Opinions, Metaphors, Baseball, and the Sex Stuff," 28 *Conn. L. Rev.* 913 (1996); Margaret Robb, "Running Bases, Winning Cases: Why the Grand Old Game of Baseball Is Much Like the Legal Profession," 82 *A.B.A. J.* 140 (August 1996); Robert M. Jarvis, "Babe Ruth as Legal Hero," 22 *Fla. St. U. L. Rev.* 885 (1995); Chad M. Oldfather, "The Hidden Ball: A Substantive Critique of Baseball Metaphors in Judicial Opinions," 27 *Conn. L. Rev.* 17 (1994); Charles Yablon, "On the Contribution of Baseball to American Legal Theory," 104 *Yale L.J.* 227 (1994); Pamela Karlan, "Throwing Out the First Pitch," 15 *Va. L. School Rep.* 23 (1991); Richard Lempert, "Error Behind the Plate and in the Law," 59 *S. Cal. L. Rev.* 407 (1986).
- ³National Visionary Leadership Project, "William T. Coleman, Jr.," available at <http://www.visionaryproject.org/nvlpmembertier/visionarist1/VisionaryPages/2003visionaries/ColemanWilliam/index.asp> (last visited August 8, 2008).
- ⁴Annette John-Hall, "William T. Coleman, Jr.—Lawyer, Social Activist," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 16, 2004, at page.
- ⁵*Id.*
- ⁶*Id.*
- ⁷National Visionary Leadership Project, *supra* note 2.
- ⁸Patty Dornbusch, "Flashback: William T. Coleman, Jr.," *Columns* 27 (Spring 1980).
- ⁹The other minority students entering Harvard in the fall of 1941 included Wade H. McCree, Jr., who later served as a judge in the Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit and as the United States Solicitor General, and George N. Leighton, who subsequently became a federal district court judge in Illinois. The fourth, William Edwards, had a successful career as a New York lawyer.
- ¹⁰"Harvard Law School Celebrates Its Black Alumni," *J. Blacks in Higher Ed.* 85–87 (2001).
- ¹¹"Many of the Nation's Most Prestigious Law Reviews Have Lily-White Editorial Boards," *J. Blacks in Higher Ed.* 55 (Spring 1998).
- ¹²Karen Hastie Williams, "William Hastie: Facing Challenges in the Ivory Tower," *J. Blacks in Higher Ed.*, 122–23 (1999). While the prejudices of the times undoubtedly denied William H. Hastie a chance to clerk at the U.S. Supreme Court, his daughter, Karen Hastie Williams, became the first black female to clerk at the Court.
- ¹³Interviews with William T. Coleman, Jr.; author's correspondence with former *Harvard Law Review* members Phil C. Neal and Jerome E. Hyman.
- ¹⁴Anthony Flint, "First Black Chosen Head of Harvard Law Journal," *Boston Globe*, February 6, 1990, at page.
- ¹⁵William T. Coleman, Jr., "In Tribute: Charles Hamilton Houston," 111 *Harv. L. Rev.* 2148, 2156–57 (June 1999).
- ¹⁶National Visionary Leadership Project, *supra* note 2; interviews with William T. Coleman, Jr., *supra* note 2.
- ¹⁷National Visionary Leadership Project, *supra* note 2.
- ¹⁸Charles E. Francis, **The Tuskegee Airmen: The Men Who Changed a Nation** (4th ed. 1997).
- ¹⁹Letter from William T. Coleman, Jr. to Hugo Black, June 20, 1946, Box 442, Personal Papers of Hugo Black (hereafter Hugo Black Papers), Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
- ²⁰Interviews with William T. Coleman, Jr., *supra* note 12.
- ²¹Letter from Hugo Black, Justice, U.S. Supreme Court, to William Coleman, June 24, 1946, Hugo Black Papers.
- ²²As with Justice Frankfurter, Coleman was not afraid to disagree with Justice Black. On one occasion, Justice Black called Coleman into his Chambers to argue about a particular point of law. Coleman politely listened to Justice Black before telling him, "[I]f you listen to what you are saying, you will see that you are wrong." Black later told Frankfurter that he had a "very relaxed" law clerk. See Interviews with William T. Coleman, Jr., *supra* note 12.
- ²³See Leonard Baker, **Brandeis and Frankfurter: A Dual Biography** (1984); *id.* at 415; interviews with William T. Coleman, Jr., *supra* note 12; interview with Louis Henkin; off-the-record interview with former Frankfurter law clerk.
- ²⁴Interview with Andrew Kaufman.
- ²⁵See Letter from Felix Frankfurter, Justice, U.S. Supreme Court, to Henry M. Hart, Jr., April 14, 1952, Box 4, Personal Papers of Henry M. Hart, Jr., Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA ("I think I ought to add that not only have I given you an unqualified power of appointment, but my experience with your exercise of it is such that I am quite happy to put that power into your hands.").
- ²⁶Reel 9, Personal Papers of Felix Frankfurter, Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA (hereafter Felix Frankfurter Papers). In fact, Frankfurter embraced qualified, diverse candidates. Kaufman remarks: "I remember how pleased he [Frankfurter] was when Al Sacks appointed John Mansfield. He was happy to have a Catholic law clerk at last and said so." See interview with Andrew Kaufman, *supra* note 23. According to Supreme Court reporter Tony Mauro, Frankfurter was more reluctant to consider female applicants and declined to follow the recommendation of Harvard Law School and select Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

- Summarizing the comments that Mauro made at a reunion of the October Term 1962 law clerks, he writes: "In recounting the sex discrimination she faced earlier in her career, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg has hinted that, but for her gender, she might have been a Supreme Court law clerk some 40 years ago. While she was clerking for a federal district judge in New York, a Harvard Law School professor recommended her to then-Justice Felix Frankfurter. But when Frankfurter learned that she had a 5-year-old daughter at home, he decided not to 'take a chance' by hiring her as a clerk, according to Ginsburg." Tony Mauro, "Supreme Court Renovations Set to Start," *Am. Law. Media*, Apr. 21, 2003.
- 27National Visionary Leadership Project, *supra* note 2; interviews with William T. Coleman, Jr., *supra* note 12.
- 28National Visionary Leadership Project, *supra* note 2.
- 29"Supreme Court Justice to Have a Negro Clerk," *N.Y. Times*, Apr. 27, 1948, at 22.
- 30"Frankfurter's Negro Clerk to be First in Court History," *Wash. Post*, Apr. 27, 1948, at 1.
- 31Reel 9, Felix Frankfurter Papers.
- 32*Id.*
- 33Richardson went on to serve as Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, Secretary of Defense, U.S. Attorney General, and Secretary of Commerce. Of course, many Americans know Richardson for his role in the Watergate scandal, when then-Attorney General Richardson refused President Richard M. Nixon's order to fire Watergate special prosecutor Archibald Cox. Like Coleman, Richardson would be awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President William J. Clinton.
- 34Interviews with William T. Coleman, Jr., *supra* note 12.
- 35Michael E. Parrish, "Justice Frankfurter and the Supreme Court," in **The Jewish Justices of the Supreme Court Revisited: Brandeis to Fortas** 67 (Jennifer M. Lowe, ed. 1994).
- 36Richard Kluger, **Simple Justice: The History of *Brown v. Board of Education* and Black America's Struggle for Equality** 292–93 (1976).
- 37Jeffrey O'Connell & Nancy Dart, "History: The House of Truth: Home of Young Frankfurter and Lippman," 35 *Cath. U.L. Rev.* 79 (1985).
- 38Stuart Taylor, Jr., "Man in the News; No Stranger to the High Court," *N.Y. Times*, Apr. 20, 1982.
- 39Baker, *supra* note 22, at 415.
- 40*Id.*
- 41Interview with Harry Wellington.
- 42Interview with Andrew Kaufman, *supra* note 23.
- 43Andrew Kaufman, "The Justice and His Law Clerks," in **Felix Frankfurter, the Judge** (Wallace Mendelson ed. 1964).
- 44"Quirks and Clerks: A Short History," *Juris Dr.* 41 (1972).
- 45Interviews with William T. Coleman, Jr., *supra* note 12.
- 46Andrew L. Kaufman, "Constitutional Law and the Supreme Court: Frankfurter and Wellington," 45 *N.Y.L.Rev.* 141 (2001).
- 47*Id.* at 142.
- 48Interviews with William T. Coleman, Jr., *supra* note 12.
- 49It would not be until 1949 that President Truman became the first President to nominate a member of a minority to an Article III judgeship. His nominee: the aforementioned William Hastie.
- 50Professor Walter Gellhorn writes that in the 1930s and 1940s, "[w]hite law firms, government, business, and bar associations were closed to the Negro. The Negro lawyer had to operate on the fringe of the profession." Walter Gellhorn, "The Law Schools and the Negro," 1968 *Duke L.J.* 1069–70 (1969).
- 51See Constance McLaughlin Green, **The Secret City: A History of Race Relations in the Nation's Capital** (1967); Flora Bryant Brown, "NAACP Sponsored Sit-Ins by Howard University Students in Washington, D.C., 1943–1944," 85 *J. Negro Hist.* 274–86 (2000); Irene Osborne, "Toward Racial Integration in the District of Columbia," 23 *J. Negro Ed.* 273–81 (1954).
- 52Interviews with William T. Coleman, Jr., *supra* note 12.
- 53See generally Todd C. Peppers, **Courtiers of the Marble Palace** (2006); Artemus Ward & David L. Weiden, **Sorcerers' Apprentices: 100 Years of Law Clerks at the United States Supreme Court** (2006); Edward Lazarus, **Closed Chambers: The First Eyewitness Account of the Epic Struggles Inside the Supreme Court** (1998).
- 54344 U.S. 873 (1952).
- 55Mark Tushnet, "What Really Happened in *Brown v. Board of Education*," 91 *Col. L. Rev.* 1867 (1991).
- 56Interviews with William T. Coleman, Jr., *supra* note 12.
- 57Steve Neal, "Coleman was Better Top Court Choice," *Chi.-Sun Times*, Oct. 18, 1991.
- 58Genna Rae McNeil, **Groundwork: Charles Hamilton Houston and the Struggle for Civil Rights** 218 (1983).
- 59National Visionary Leadership Project, *supra* note 2.
- 60Linda Greenhouse, "Women Suddenly Scarce Among Justices' Law Clerks," *N.Y. Times*, Aug. 30, 2006.
- 61Interviews with William T. Coleman, Jr., *supra* note 12.
- 62Chris Mondics, "Tenacity & Power," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Apr. 8, 2007.
- 63National Visionary Leadership Project, *supra* note 2.
- 64John-Hall, *supra* note 3.
- 65Mondics, *supra* note 61.
- 66461 U.S. 574 (1983).
- 67Jay Horning, "A Passion for Law That Never Waned," *St. Petersburg Times*, Sept. 8, 1996.
- 68The first black man to serve in a Cabinet-level position was Robert C. Weaver, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development from 1966 to 1968.
- 69Steve Neal, "Private, Powerful Bill Coleman Goes Public," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 26, 1975.

⁷⁰Coleman received honorary degrees from the following colleges and universities: Amherst College, Bard College, Bates College, Central Michigan University, the College of William & Mary, Columbia University, Drexel University, Georgetown University, Harvard University, Howard University, Lincoln University, Marymount University, St. Joseph's College, Saint Michael's College, Swarthmore College, Syracuse University, Tulane University, the

University of the District of Columbia, the University of Pennsylvania, Williams College, and Yale University.

⁷¹Joe Burris, "One Supreme Day: Recalling the Swearing-In of Thurgood Marshall 40 Years Ago," *Baltimore Sun*, Oct. 2, 2007.

⁷²Joan Biskupic, "One 'Whose Career Made Us Dream Large Dreams,'" *Wash. Post*, Jan. 29, 1993, at page.

⁷³Interviews with William T. Coleman, Jr., *supra* note 12.